DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 077 EA 016 601

AUTHOR Natriello, Gary
TITLE Organizational Evaluation Systems and Student Disengagement in Secondary Schools.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 11-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Achievement Rating; Educational Administration; *Evaluation Methods; Organizational Effectiveness; Organizational Theories; Peer Evaluation; *Power Structure; Secondary Education; Student Alienation; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior; *Student Evaluation; Surveys

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study intended to examine problems in student evaluation systems that may lead to manifestations of student disengagement from secondary school such as absenteeism, low effort, violence, or vandalism. A theoretical framework is provided by Dornbusch and Scott's theory of evaluation and authority in organizations, which assumes that participants place value on performance evaluations and establish an "acceptance level" or minimum satisfactory level of evaluation. The theory discusses evaluation systems in terms of a typology of authority system incompatibilities that prevent participants from achieving evaluations at or above their acceptance level. A self-report survey on levels of incompatibilities in evaluation of academic performance and social behavior was administered to 293 high school students. The general findings were that evaluation of academic work is characterized by more problems with misunderstandings of criteria, nonrepresentative samples, inappropriately high standards, and active tasks, while evaluation of social behavior shows higher levels of problems due to interdependence of group participants, coordination failures, and conflicts between staff's and peers' criteria. It is concluded that the theoretical incompatibilities in evaluation and authority systems do occur frequently for secondary students and that future investigations might try to link these incompatibilities to student disengagement. (MJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gary Natriello

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED242077

Organizational Evaluation Systems and Student Disengagement in Secondary Schools

Gary Natriello

Washington Univerrity

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada, April 1983

EA 016 601

Organizational Evaluation Systems and Student Disengagement in Secondary Schools

In 1974, Spady pointed to the importance of the institutional arrangements of schools and in particular to the perceived illegitimacy of the evaluation and reward structure of the school for any explanation of student disruption. The present paper reports on the results of a study designed to systematically examine problems in school evaluation systems that may lead to student disengagement from secondary schools.

Athough a great deal of attention has been devoted to the manifestations of student disengagement from school in such behaviors as absenteeism (Birman and Natriello, 1980), low levels of student effort on school tasks (Massey, Scott, and Dornbusch, 1975), and student participation in negative activities such as violence and vandalism (McPartland and McDill, 1977; National Institute of Education, 1978), relatively little attention has been paid to potential sources of these difficulties in the organizational features of schools. Polk and Schaefer (1972) have examined the effects of school tracking procedures, McPartland and McDill (1977) have noted the importance of school policies that are responsive to student behavior, and Spady (1974) has specified a theoretical rationale for the impact of such organizational properties. Each of these investigators has noted the relationship between organizational aspects of schools and student participation or disengagement from the school program.

In this paper the results of a study of problems in school evaluation systems are examined to develop a portrait of the distribution of such problems for students. Related papers have examined the relationship between these problems and various manifestations of student disengagement. Here the concentration is on the description of such problems and the implications of them for the reform of the organizational structure of secondary schools.

A Theory of Evaluation and Authority in Organizations

The study reported here was guided by the theory of evaluation and authority developed by Dornbusch and Scott and their colleagues (1975) through a series of studies on evaluation processes in a variety of organizations. The theory specifically addresses the relationship between features of evaluation and authority systems and the disengagement of performers in organizations. It provides a framework for considering problems in the evaluation systems encountered by students in secondary schools.

The theory rests on several basic assumptions which seem to be met by school organizations. First, it assumes that the organizational participants being evaluated, in this case the students, place some value on the performance evaluations they receive. Second, it assumes that the participants establish an "acceptance level" or a minimum level of performance evaluation that is satisfactory to them. Studies of the evaluation of students by teachers conducted by Natriello and Dornbusch (1983)

have shown that both of these conditions are met in schools for most students. Students do place some value on their performance evaluations and they do establish a minimum level of performance evaluation that is acceptable. Of course, students vary in both respects. Some students place greater value on their performance evaluations than others, and some students also set higher "acceptance levels" for their performance evaluations than other students. Nevertheless, the theory merely asserts that these conditions be present to some degree, and this is certainly true in the case of secondary school students.

Authority System Incompatibility

The theory of evaluation and authority discusses problems in evaluation systems in terms of "authority system incomptibility." According to the theory, an authority system is incompatible when it prevents performers from maintaining evaluations of their performance at or above their acceptance level. Thus such incompatibility involves the recept of evaluations by a performer below acceptance level and the perception that it is the authority system itself that keeps the performer from attaining evaluations at or above acceptance level. Incompatibility is a property of the authority system, not a characteristic of the performer. Incompatibility refers to problems in the evaluation and authority system that would affect any individual performer who had at least the same acceptance level.

Dornbusch and Scott (1975) develop a typology of authority system incompatibilities by considering the requirements of the simplest case of a compatible authority system. In such a system

the performer would receive an unambiguous task assignment which did not conflict with other assignments received for the same or other tasks. Second, the performer's activities would affect the values of the relevant properties for performances and outcomes on which the performer would be evaluated. Third, the sample taken of the performer's work would provide valid information as to the values actually achieved in the full performance. Fourth, the standards for evaluation would be set appropriately so that the performer could expect to receive evaluations at the acceptance level by adjusting the level of effort. The typology of incompatibilities in evaluation and authority systems is based on the violation of one or more of these requirements for a compatible authority system.

The first type of incompatibility identified by the theory is termed "contradictory evaluations." Contradictory evaluations occur when performers are put in a situation where the receipt of one evaluation at or above a level acceptable to them necessarily entails receiving another evaluation below a level acceptable to them. In such situations performers are both rewarded and punished for the same behavior.

Contradictory evaluations may arise from three sources: conflicting criteria, conflicting samples, and conflicting allocations. Conflicting criteria may involve either conflicting standards or conflicting properties or both. Conflicting standards arise when when performer is evaluated by two different supervisors who represent different areas of speciality or expertise.

A classic example of the case of conflicting criteria is the case of speed and accuracy. For example, in schools students are often expected to perform under time constraints. Yet the time limitations on tests and exercises may prevent students from doing their work carefully and accurately. A student may thus either work quickly and make mistakes or take his or her time and fail to complete the work. In either case the student will fail to receive evaluations at or above acceptance level.

Contradictory evaluations may also occur in the case where conflicting samples of a performer's work are taken. This most often occurs when performers are told how to accomplish a task and then samples are taken of both their performance and the results of their performance. In such cases the prescribed way of accomplishing a task may not lead to satisfactory outcomes. The performer may thus either perform as directed and fail to achieve the desired outcomes or deviate from the prescribed procedures to achieve the outcomes. In either case the performer will receive evaluations below the acceptance level.

In schools this might occur when students are told to get to classes on time but not to run in the halls. In certain schools the physical layout and the schedule of classes may make it necessary for students to run in the halls in order to arrive at their next class on time. In such cases the students may either walk to class and be late or run to class and arrive on time. In either case they are likely to receive an evaluation below their acceptance level.

Finally, contradictory evaluation may arise from conflicting allocations when other tasks allocated to the performer conflict

with the task in question. Quite often the tasks must compete for the time of the performer. The performer may be able to do one or the other task but not both. As a consequence, the performer will receive an evaluation below acceptance level for at least one of the tasks.

In secondary schools this may happen to students quite often since they typically receive assignments from a large number of supervisors. A student may receive major homework assignments on the same day from four or five teachers. Or several tests may be scheduled for the same day. Or perhaps, a test will be scheduled on the day following the evening during which the student must be involved in some athletic competition. In each of these situations, the student may have several tasks, all of which compete for a limited amount of time. As a result, the student may receive evaluations below acceptance level on one or more tasks.

Performers may thus be subject contradictory evalutions which arise from conflicting criteria, conflicting samples, or conflicting allocations. Although contradictory evaluations often arise when a performer is evaluated by more than one supervisor, they may also arise when only one evaluator is involved.

Uncontrollable evaluations are a second source of authority system incompatibility. Uncontrollable evaluations occur when performers receive evaluations below a level acceptable to them for performances or outcomes they do not control. Such uncontrollable evaluations arise when there is a coordination

failure in the organizational control system, when performers are working interdependently on tasks, and when tasks are active or unpredictable.

A coordination failure in the control system can arise and lead to the incorrect attribution of a performance evaluation to a performer. This might occur when an unsatisfactory performance or outcome is noted and the evaluation is incorrectly assigned to a participant whose performance did not contribute to the outcome. This is most likely to happen in complex authority systems where the control tasks are distributed among several supervisors. However, there are some obvious situations of coordination failure in schools involving very simple single supervisor authority systems.

For example, a teacher may hear talking in the back of a classroom and incorrectly identify the offending student. Students with histories of behavior problems may be particularly likely to receive such incorrect attributions. The student, of course, may have done nothing to contribute to the negatively evaluated performance, but receives an evaluation below acceptance level nonetheless.

The interdependence of performers may also give rise to a situation of uncontrollable evaluations. Interdependence occurs when more than one person contributes to a task outcome which is used as the basis for evaluation. It is very difficult to assess the contributions of individuals to a group product. Participants evaluated on the basis of such group products may not have control of their evaluations. Dornbusch and Scott observe that this may arise when one individual is responsible

for making a decision and other individuals are responsible for implementing those decisions. It may also arise when two individuals are responsible for implementation.

The difficulties of assessing individual performance based on a group product often lead teachers to avoid group projects in schools. Students also sometimes seek to avoid such situations, and when they can't avoid them they often seek to control the membership of the group. Those students interested in a good evaluation will seek to minimize the risk of negative evaluation by selecting other students whom they can count on to be in their group. Teachers typically find students requesting to select their own groups for group projects. This represents a desire on the part of students to control their evaluations on the group tasks. This process is perhaps nowhere more visible than in the selection of teams in physical education. There members of the teams are typically selected by team captains who attempt to maximize the team's chances of winning by selecting individuals who will perform well and avoiding those likely to perform poorly.

Extracurricular activities often involve students in situations where they cannot control the group performance and outcome. This may occur because some students are charged with making decisions and others with implementing them or it may occur when more than one student is involved in implementation. The evaluation of a student council leader responsible for seeing to it that other students carry out a program involves interdependence of the first sort; while the performance of

members of an athletic team involves interdependence of the latter sort.

A less obvious case of interdependence occurs in situations where work done individually by students is graded on a curve. In such cases the evaluation of student performance depends upon the performance of other students, performances beyond the direct control of the student in question. In this instance a student will receive a higher evaluation to the extent that other students perform poorly. If other students perform extremely well, the focal student may receive evaluations below his or her acceptance level. This is bacause when grading is done on a curve, "there are always winners and losers, regardless of the objective standards of performance attained." (Spady, 1975:54.) Thus in contrast to those situations where group products are evaluated and it is in the interests of a student to insure the good performance of his or her peers, in the situation where individual products are evaluated in light of group norms, it is in the interests of a student to insure the poor performance of his or her peers. Such conditions in a mild form are likely to discourage students from helping one another on class work, and in a severe form may lead students to sabatoge the work of their peers. These acts represent attempts by students to control the evaluations of their own work.

The case of what Dornbusch and Scott refer to as "active" tasks presents a third source of uncontrollable evaluations. Dornbusch and Scott define active tasks as ones that are low in clarity, predictability, and efficacy. Thus a great deal of uncertainty surrounds the performance of active tasks. This

makes it particularly difficult to infer individual performance based on inspection of the outcomes of the task. In the case of active tasks competent performances do not always lead to successful outcomes.

To obtain accurate information on the performance of such active tasks it is often necessary to directly observe performance. Of course, with many tasks it is quite difficult to make such observations due to resistance from performers, prohibitive costs, or the impossibility of inspecting certain types of performance. Thus the chances of uncontrollable evaluations increase to the extent that performers are evaluated on the outcomes of their active tasks.

The academic work of students in schools is particularly susceptible to the problems associated with active tasks. Intellectual tasks, particularly those involving high levels of creativity, are often quite low in clarity, predictability, and efficacy. This makes it difficult for teachers to infer performance from the inspection of outcomes. Moreover, most intellectual tasks are performed in the minds of the students, making them impossible to observe. The classic teacher's injunction "show your work" is an attempt by teachers to make the performance of such invisible tasks more accessible to them for evaluation purposes. A prevailing problem for teachers who wish to assign active tasks to students is the problem of assessing student performance or effort on tasks where products or outcomes may not necessarily be a good reflection of such effort. This, of course, makes it difficult for teachers to encourage student

effort in school.

Teachers have often been charged with assigning routinized, boring tasks to their students. What such criticism of teachers fails to take into account is the very real problems for the evaluation of students that confront teachers who assign active or creative tasks a large portion of the time. In these circumstances teachers are seldom certain about the performance or effort put forth by their students. Some students may work very hard and seldom if ever produce a satisfactory product. If teachers never assign routine tasks where the relationship between effort and outcome is more straightforward, these students may never be encouraged to continue to put forth effort. Thus the assignment of what to the outsider appear to be rather dull, often mindless tasks may serve the important function of demonstrating the connection between student effort and student evaluations. Of course, when such tasks completely dominate the work of a class, they may signal a retreat by the teacher from any attempt to involve the students in the most creative aspects of the learning process.

While coordination failures in the control system, performer interdependence, and active tasks are quite different in nature, they all lead to the type of incompatibility labelled as uncontrollable evaluations. In each situation performers receive evaluations below their acceptance level for performances or outcomes they do not control.

A third type of incompatibility, unpredictable evaluations, occurs when performers receive evaluations below a level acceptable to them because they are unable to predict accurately

the relationship between attributes of their performances and the level of evaluations they receive. Unpredictable evaluations may occur when perfomrers misunderstand task allocations, when they misunderstand the criteria used for evaluation, and when the samples of performances and outcomes used for purposes of evaluation are nonrepresentative.

Misunderstandings of allocations may occur when performers are not aware that a task has been allocated, or when the form of the allocation is unclear. When allocations are not clear then the performer may receive evaluations that were not expected and thus could not be predicted.

Dornbusch and Scott note that misunderstanding of allocations may result when an allocator forgets to communicate the allocation or communicates it in an ambiguous way. This is likely to occur in schools when teachers are assigning particular tasks to students for the first time. To the extent that teachers assign new and different tasks to students from year to year, to that extent they really lack experience in the allocation of such tasks. The assignment of even the simplest tasks may lead to misunderstandings on the part of students that cannot be anticipated by the teacher. This problem is likely to be particularly acute at the beginning of the term when teachers and students have no experience dealing with each other over matters of work assignment and evaluation. Students may make assumptions about the nature of a task allocation based on previous experience with other teachers only to discover that the present teacher operates quite differently.

Misunderstandings of criteria used to evaluate an individual's performance may result from insufficiently specific criteria or from the failure of evaluators to communicate the set criteria. In either case performers lack the specific criteria according to which they might shape their behavior in performance of the task. At times performers may even have incorrect information about the criteria employed in evaluating their performance.

Student requests to teachers to know "What counts?" or "What are you looking for?" represent attempts to reduce misunderstandings of criteria. Given the complex nature of some academic tasks, great effort and care must be taken by teachers to specify and communicate the criteria used for evaluation of student work. When teachers assume that students should "know" what "good work" is and refuse to specify what they will be looking for when evaluating student work, they often create situations that for many students lead to misunderstandings of criteria. Of course, some students are much better than others at "reading teachers" and giving them what they want, but other students will simply be unable to predict the relationship between their performance and the evaluations they can expect to receive.

Even when task allocations and criteria are clearly communicated, a condition of unpredictable evaluations may arise if the samples of an individual's performance are not representative of true performance. If a performer is aware of the task allocations and criteria, it is still not possible to predict the evaluations that will be received for a given level

of performance when the sample of information on performance used for the evaluation is not an accurate reflection of true performance. As a result, the individual may not be able to modify performance to receive evaluations at or above acceptance level.

Ideally, teachers should collect samples of student performance which reflect their true performance in class. Tests and exercises should be frequent enough and broad enough to accurately reflect the total student performance and students should clearly perceive the connection between the total performance in a class and their performance on tests and exercises which are only samples of their performance. However, when the samples of student performance used in evaluation are very infrequent or very narrow in relation to the total performance, then such samples are less likely to be an accurate reflection of total performance, and students may come to perceive little relationship between their total performance and the evaluations they receive. In such cases, students cannot predict their evaluations from knowledge of the level of their performances.

Problems in any of these areas of the evaluation process, misunderstandings of allocations, misunderstandings of criteria, or nonrepresentative samples, can lead to a condition of unpredictable evaluations. In this condition, performers cannot see the connection between what they do and the evaluations they receive.

A condition of unattainable evaluations, the fourth type of

incompatibility, arises when the standards used to evaluate performers are so high that they cannot achieve evaluations at a level acceptable to them. Performers are subjected to unattainable evaluations when the standards used to evaluate them are inappropriately high, when their tasks are unpredictable, and when they lack the facilities nece[illegible] to perform their tasks.

Inappropriately high standard[illegible]y be employed in the assessment of performance when performers or tasks are new and when there are no applicable standards based on previous experience. For example, when new employees attempt to perform tasks for the first time, it is usually inappropriate to employ the same standards used to assess the performance of experienced workers. When a task is assigned for the first time, a supervisor may not know what standards to expect for performance and may set them too high. Inappropriately high stnadards may also occur in highly competitive situations in which supervisors seek perfection and subordinates keep trying to perfect their performances. Competent, but less able subordinates may not be able to attain the standards set by the most able.

Inappropriately high standards may easily arise in school situations. Students are often in a position where they are performing a task for the first time. Teachers must constantly take into account the lack of experience of students in performing many of their assigned tasks. Moreover, to the extent that teachers incorporate new material and tasks into their teaching, they must also deal with the problem of setting appropriate standards with no previous experience of student performance on the tasks. Finally, given the range of abilities

in any group of students teachers must attempt to challenge students without raising the standards to the point where many students cannot achieve acceptable evaluations.

The nature of active tasks may also lead to problems of unattainable evaluations. Since the resistance to the performance of active tasks is unpredictable, it is difficult to set standards at an appropriate level. Standards may easily be set at a level that is unattainable for most performers.

Teachers from time to time find themselves in the position of having assigned tasks to students only to find that performing the task was much more difficult than the teacher originally anticipated. At times none of the students will be able to perform the task successful, at other times one or two students will succeed, but the majority of the students will fall far below the previously defined level of acceptable performance. In either case the teachers must decide whether and how to adjust the evaluations of student performance. One way of handling these situations is to grade on a curve so that the maximum evaluations go to the students with the best performance while the minimum evaluations go to those with the worst performance. Of course, as pointed out earlier, if teachers regularly grade on a curve so that those students with the worst performance always receive the minimum evaluations, those students will experience a situation of uncontrollable evaluations due to interdependence of performers. The point here is that grading on a curve solves the problem of setting standards for active tasks by allowing the current group norm to determine the standard.

Lack of facilities may also lead to a condition of unattainable evaluations. Facilities may refer to physical equipment or to organizational rights such as rights to authority over others. No matter how hard they try, performers without the necessary facilities may not be able to attain evaluations at or above their acceptance level.

Teachers know that they must plan lessons and assignments so as not to require access to equipment or resources not readily available to all their students. Still, there are times when it is not possible to foresee all such needs. For example, an assignment to trace one's geneology may be impossible for a student without access to family records of older relatives. Access to equipment and resources are often problematic as students seek to improve their performance in extracurricular activities. Students may not have as much access to practice rooms and equipment as may be necessary for them to improve their performance to attain evaluations at or above their acceptance level.

Inappropriately high standards, active tasks, and lack of facilities all present problems for the evaluation of performance. In each case a situation may be created where it is impossible for performers to attain evaluations at or above their acceptance level.

Design

The present study was designed to provide self-report survey data on the levels of authority system incompatibility experienced by students in high schools.

Sample

The study was conducted in the four senior high schools of a large suburban school district in a major metropolitan area in the midwest. The district, which spent $2052.92 per pupil during the 1979-1980 school year, is generally considered among the best in the area. The overwhelming majority of students in the four high schools are white. The mean SAT math and verbal scores of in each school are above the national average, and over two-thirds of the students at each school have made plans to continue with their education beyond high school.

The student survey was administered to a random sample of 5% of the students at each high school. The final sample of 293 students contains 291 students from the original sample and 2 students from a randomly selected list of alternates.

The Student Survey

The student survey was developed to assess the extent to which students experienced incompatibilities in the authority and evaluation systems of the school. A structured interview dealing with the incompatibilities likely to arise in schools was developed. This interview form was pilot-tested using sixty students from two of the four high schools in the Spring of 1980. The results of the pilot test (Natriello and Scott, 1981) led to the development of a preliminary student survey which, after further pilot testing, was refined to the form used for the present study.

The final student survey contained items on the levels of incompatibilities in the evaluation of academic work and social behavior in general as well as items about

incompatibilities in the evaluation of academic work and social behavior in specific classes. The student survey was administered in the Spring of 1981. The survey took approximately 45 minutes to complete. During the administration of the survey, members of the research team were available to answer questions about the interpretation of certain items. Since the survey had been extensively pretested and reworded using language familiar to the students, there were few questions. Each student completing a survey received a $10 gift certificate.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of the student survey items which focused on incompatibilities in general in the areas of academic achievement and social behavior.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Students were asked to report how often each of the instances of incompatibility occured to them so that they received evaluations low enough to make them dissatisfied. The specific instances of incompatibility are described in the left most column.

For academic tasks, over 70% of the students reported tht they received evaluations low enough to make them dissatisfied due to conflicting properties, conflicting allocations, nonrepresentative samples, and active tasks. The example of conflicting properties dealt with the time limitations that

students often have to work under in school. Spady (1974) has noted the problems such arrangements cause. Conflicting allocations are a prevalent problem most likely because of the multiple supervisors involved in the evaluation of academic work. The high rate of problems due to nonrepresentative sampling of student work suggests that students perceive that teachers do not take samples of their work so as to get an accurate reflection of their true performance. Finally, the high rate of students receiving evaluations low enough to make them dissatisfied despite hard work suggests that academic tasks are highly active, that is, the connection between effort and outcome is not predictable. Students who feel that they work hard are quite likely to receive dissatisfying evaluations. Of course, such students may not have an accurate perspective on how hard they are really working (Dornbusch, 1974).

Over 60% of the students reported receiving evaluations that made them dissatisfied due to interdependence of performers and to inappropriately high standards. Thus group work appears to present problems for the evaluation of students as does the setting of appropriate standards for academic tasks.

Two other incompatibilities were reported to lead to dissatisfying evaluations by over 50% of the students. Misunderstandings of allocations and of criteria seem to be fairly common experiences for students. Over half of the students reported being unaware of an assignment or test and over half reported not knowing how they were expected to perform at least sometimes.

The remaining three incompatibilities were reported as

leading to dissatisfying evaluations by fewer than one-third of the students. Instances of conflicting criteria, either between school staff members or between school staff members and student peers were reported to lead to dissatisfying evaluations by about one-fifth of the students. Nearly one-third of the students said that being evaluated on something they had nothing to do with led to dissatisfying evaluations.

If we compare the incompatibilities reported for academic tasks to those reported for the task of social behavior we find that in general there are far fewer reports of incompatibilities for the evaluation of student behavior. The most dramatic difference in the level of reported incompatibilities occurs for the case of active tasks. While nearly three-fourths of the students find the connection between effort and evaluation uncertain for academic tasks, only slightly less than one-fourth find it uncertain for behavioral tasks. Clearly, social behavior is less active (i.e. the resistance to successful performance is less unpredictable) than academic work.

Major differences are also apparent if we compare the levels of reported incompatibilities in the case of misunderstandings of allocations and criteria, nonrepresentative samples, and inappropriately high standards. In each case the incompatibility is more likely to arise in the evaluation of academic tasks than in the evaluation of social behavior tasks.

The remaining incompatibilities are also more likely to arise in connection with academic work than in connection with the evaluation of social behavior except for conflicts between

staff members and student peers and for coordination failures in the control system. Students report that they are more likely to experience a conflict between staff members and student peers in the case of social behavior than in the case of academic work. This may be because student peers have stronger feelings about behavior and because behavior is readily visible to peers, more visible than academic performance. Students also report that they are more likely to be evaluated on something which they had nothing to do with in the case of social behavior than in the case of academic work. This may be due to the measures taken by teachers to maintain a close connection between an individual student and his or her academic products. The flow of social behavior may prohibit school officials from maintaining such a close connection between student behavior and evaluations of that behavior.

Examining just the student responses to incompatibilities connected with the evaluation of social behavior, we find that the most prevalent incompatibility mentioned by students as leading to dissatisfying evaluations is interdependence of performers. Once again, the constant flow of social behavior may prevent school staff from accurately attributing behavioral performances to individual students in group situations.

Over half of the students reported that they at least sometimes experienced a situation where an evaluation of their social behavior was based on atypical behavior. Over forty percent of the students reported experiencing conflicting properties, and over forty percent reported experiencing a coordination failure in the control system at least sometimes.

On the other hand, only 15% of the students sometimes experienced a situation where they had to displease one supervisor in order to please another. This suggests that the staff members are in agreement as to the criteria for behavior. This is supported by the fact that only 21% of the students reported a misunderstanding of the criteria sometimes leading to an evaluation which made them dissatisfied. Criteria for social behavior thus appear to be more consistent and clearer than those for academic work.

Table 2 presents the average percentages of students reporting that they experienced incompatibilities at least "sometimes" in an individual class. The instances of incompatibility from the survey items appear in the left-most column.

Insert Table 2 About Here

In comparison with the percentages reported for incompatibilities in the overall school experience reported in Table 1, the percentages reported in Table 2 are more modest. Still, an average of over 40% of the students reported that they received evaluations of academic work low enough to make them dissatisfied due to active tasks in a class. Over 30% were dissatisfied, on average, with evaluations due to inappropriately high standards and misunderstandings of criteria in a class.

The high proportion of students reporting inappropriately high standards or problems with the evaluation of active tasks

suggests that teachers are not entirely successful in teaching at a level of difficulty appropriate for students of differing abilities. The problem with misunderstandings of criteria suggests that for some students teachers do not make it sufficiently clear exactly what is important in a class.

Nearly thirty percent of the students, on the average, reported that they received evaluations low enough to make them dissatisfied because of being given a limited amount of time to complete an assignment (conflicting properties). The fact that, in any given class, nearly one-third of the students experience this problem, speaks to the prevalence of problems linked to time limits on assignments and tests.

Almost one-fourth of the students reported problems with conflicting allocations. Even in individual classes, students reported receiving so many assignments that they found it impossible to do well and complete them all.

Nearly one-fourth of the students reported that the tests and assignments given in a class didn't measure what they had learned. These non-representative samples led to students receiving evaluations below their acceptance leve.

On average, about one-sixth of the students received evaluations below their acceptance level due to misunderstandings of allocations. These students were unaware of assignments or tests until it was too late.

Nearly one-sixth of the students reported that working in a group in a class led to the receipt of evaluations low enough to make them dissatisfied despite the fact that their own performance was acceptable. In view of the relatively limited

use of group work in most classrooms, this figure suggests that a sound system for evaluating student performance is one of the problems to be addressed by a teacher wishing to increase the amount of group work in a plan of instruction.

An average of 10% of the students reported experiencing an evaluation below their acceptance level due to a coordination failure in the control system. These students found themselves being evaluated on academic work that they had nothing to do with. A similar proportion of students reported conflict between the criteria for evaluation used by school staff and the criteria used by their peers. Only slightly more than 3% of the students found themselves in a situation where they had to displease one school supervisor in order to please another school supervisor. These three incompatibilities were also reported least frequently in the questions regarding overall evaluations.

Student responses to items related to social behavior reveal that there are less likely to be incompatibilities associated with the evaluation of behavior than with the evaluation of academic work. Nonrepresentative samples of behavior are most frequently mentioned by students as leading to evaluations of their behavior below their acceptance level. Over 20% of the students reported being evaluated on samples of behavior which are atypical for them.

Interdependence of performers led to the second highest level of reports of evaluations below acceptance level. Over one-sixth of the students reported problems related to their lack of control over the behavior of other students when in a group.

Fifteen percent of the students reported receiving evaluations below their acceptance level because they didn't understand the criteria for good behavior used by a teacher and 14% found themselves unable to behave as well as they would like despite trying hard.

Coordination failures in the control system, inappropriately high standards, and a conflict in the criteria used by school officials and peers each led to evaluations below acceptance level for over 12% of the students.

When we compare the average levels of incompatibilities reported for the evaluation of social behavior with the average levels of incompatibilities reported for the evaluation of academic work, some not surprising patterns emerge. The evaluation of academic work seems to lead to more problems with misunderstandings of criteria, nonrepresentative samples, inappropriately high standards, and active tasks. On the other hand, the evaluation of social behavior seems to lead to slightly higher levels of problems due to the interdependence of performers in a group, coordination failures in the control system, and conflicts between the criteria used by staff and the criteria used by peers.

Conclusions

The present study suggests that the types of incompatibilities in evalution and authority systems identified by the theory of evaluation and authority do, indeed, seem to occur with some regularity to students in secondary schools. The fact that these problems in evaluation systems vary by the type

of tasks further suggests that a task-specific approach may be useful for examining evaluations in authority systems as complex as those found in secondary schools. Finally, future analyses and investigations might try to link these incompatibilities in school authority systems to student disengagement in school organizations.

References

Birman, B. and G. Natriello. "Perspectives on Absenteeism in High Schools: Multiple Explanations for an Epidemic," in Robert Rubel, ed. School Crime and Violence. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1980.

Dornbusch, S.M. and W.R. Scott. Evaluation and the Exercise of Authority. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975.

Dornbusch, S.M. "To Try or Not to Try," The Stanford Magazine, Fall/Winter, 1974, 2:51-54.

Massey, G.C., M.V. Scott, and S.M. Dornbusch. "Racism Without Racists: Institutional Racism in Urban Schools," The Black Scholar, 7, November 1975.

McPartland, J. and E. McDill, eds., Violence in Schools. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1977.

National Institute of Education. Violent Schools-Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to the Congress. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978.

Natriello, G. and S.M. Dornbusch. Teacher Evaluative Standards and Student Effort. New York: Longman, forthcoming.

Polk, K. and W. Schafer. Schools and Delinquency. Engleswood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Spady, W. "The Autority System of the School and Student Unrest: A Theoretical Exploration," in C.W. Gordon, ed., Uses of the Sociology of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 197[illegible].

Table 1

Percentages of Students Reporting that they Experienced Incompatibilities at Least "Sometimes" in School

Incompatibilities	Student Task Areas	
	Academic	Behavior
Contradictory Evaluations		
A. Conflicting Criteria		
Student has to displease one supervisor in order to please another supervisor	21.4% 62/290	15.1% 44/291
Student has to displease either school officials or peers to please the other	22.3% 65/291	30.6% 89/291
B. Conflicting Properties		
Student is given a limited amount of time to complete an assignment	73.9% 215/291	43.6% 127/291
C. Conflicting Allocations		
Student is assigned so many things that it is impossible to do well and complete them all	73.4% 212/289	29.2% 85/291
Uncontrollable Evaluations		
A. Coordination Failure in the Control System		
Student is evaluated on something which s/he had nothing to do with	31.4% 88/289	42.1% 122/290
B. Interdependence of Performers		
Student is working in a group and doing well, but has no control over performance of others	67.0% 195/291	61.5% 179/291
Unpredictable Evaluations		
A. Misunderstandings of Allocations		
Student is unaware of assignment or test until it is too late	55.3% 161/291	28.2% 82/291

B. Misunderstandings of Criteria		
Student doesn't know how how s/he is expected to perform	53.3% 155/291	21.2% 62/291
C. Nonrepresentative Samples		
Student is evaluated based on a performance which is atypical	77.0% 224/291	53.6% 156/291
Unattainable Evaluations		
A. Inappropriately High Standards		
Standards used to evaluate student's performance are much too high	62.9% 183/291	35.7% 104/291
B. Active Tasks		
Student is not able to do as well as s/he would like despite hard work	72.9% 212/291	23.0% 67/291

Table 2
Average Percentages of Students Reporting that they Experienced Incompatibilities at Least "Sometimes" in Class

Incompatibilities	Student Task Areas	
	Academic	Behavior
Contradictory Evaluations		
A. Conflicting Criteria		
Student has to displease one supervisor in order to please another supervisor	3.4%	No Question
Student has to displease either school officials or peers to please the other	9.5%	12.2%
B. Conflicting Properties		
Student is given a limited amount of time to complete an assignment	29.5%	No Question
C. Conflicting Allocations		
Student is assigned so many things in a class that it is impossible to do well and complete them all	24.8%	No Question
Uncontrollable Evaluations		
A. Coordination Failure in the Control System		
Student is evaluated on something which s/he had nothing to do with	10.6%	13.3%
B. Interdependence of Performers		
Student is working in a group and doing well, but has no control over performance of others	16.8%	17.7%
Unpredictable Evaluations		
A. Misunderstandings of Allocations		
Student is unaware of assignment or test until it is too late	18.7%	No Question

B. Misunderstandings of Criteria		
Student doesn't know what a teacher considers important	31.5%	15.4%
C. Nonrepresentative Samples		
Tests and assignments don't measure what student has learned//atypical behavior	24.4%	20.9%
Unattainable Evaluations		
A. Inappropriately High Standards		
Standards used to evaluate student's performance are much too high	34.2%	12.8%
B. Active Tasks		
Student is not able to do as well as s/he would like despite hard work	41.1%	14.0%